

DECISION NOTICE:
**Fish Wildlife & Parks Restoration of the McCarty Cabin at Makoshika
State Park**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Makoshika State Park
P O Box 1242
Glendive, MT 59330
(406) 377-6256
March 14, 2014

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The improvement proposed herein for Makoshika State Park is the restoration of the McCarty Cabin, the McCarty Cabin access road and McCarty Cabin parking loop. The cabin is a 20 foot by 20 foot log cabin situated within the property boundaries of Makoshika State Park, County of Dawson, in the NE ¼ of Sec 18, T15N, R56E. The cabin sits at the top of a steep draw or coulee within that area, on the edge of where the coulee meets a grassy bench at an elevation of 2,500 feet above sea level.

The cabin suffers from unmitigated decay resulting from environmental exposure, disuse and lack of upkeep. The most significant structural damage occurs along the western wall, which receives the prevailing westerly wind and weather. There is decay and collapse of three of the logs on the western wall, with the southern portion of the western wall, extending from the southwest corner to a point including the southernmost window on the western wall, having fallen outward and exposing the interior of the structure.

The roof has decayed, causing openings in the roof in the southeasterly quarter of the roof. There are no windows left in the window frames, and both the main entry door and the door to the porch are ill fitting and do not close properly. The porch is collapsed over much of the southern half of the flooring, and the railing is all that remains of what was once a screened porch around the flooring. The foundation, flooring and all cabin walls except the western wall are in good condition.

The cabin and surrounding property has not received any site modifications or modernization following the early 1940s land donation to Dawson County for the purposes of establishing the site as a county park. The cabin and 160 acres surrounding the cabin remained under private ownership during this time. Following the 1953 establishment of Makoshika State Park as a Montana State Park, barrier posts were installed at the entrance to the cabin's access road to restrict access to the property, as the cabin remained in the McCarty's possession until 2010, when the cabin and the surrounding 160 acres reserved by the McCartys was gifted to Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

The intent of this project is to accomplish three objectives. The first objective is to restore the cabin for safe use. The historical appearance and cabin size will remain the same. Replacement logs will be used to replace old rotten logs but they will match the existing logs. The roof will be replaced with a metal roof for durability and fire safety that will resemble the current tarpaper roof in appearance. The back porch area needs full replacement because of deterioration and public safety concerns. The doors and windows will be replaced with modern, energy efficient features that resemble the originals in appearance and function. Electrical power will be added to the cabin. Consideration will be made to provide for water use in the cabin. There is an existing hand pump well located down slope of the cabin. Options for a grey-water drain for supply and washing purposes will be explored and put in place if practical and appropriate.

The second objective is to restore the abandoned road to the McCarty Cabin utilizing the existing road footprint and to provide for parking. The main road will be 18 feet wide and 600 feet in length. The road surface will contain packed gravel. In addition to the main road, and included in the road length, we will add a loop at the end of the road for parking and ease of exit from the area. The loop will be large enough for parking six vehicles, including a compliant Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking space. The loop will be visible from the main road and serve for trail parking as well. Beyond the loop, a gated road will provide access to the cabin itself for maintenance and disabled visitors with a two vehicle parking space. Road construction from the parking area will be a width of at least 18 feet wide and 285 feet in length.

The third objective is to install a vault latrine in the area. The cabin is expected to generate overnight use and a vault latrine will be needed and installed near the parking loop area.

The Montana State Parks Heritage Program leader completed a cultural survey of the site on June 4th, 2014 and found no evidence of cultural resources that would adversely affected by the project.

The proposed project is intended to expand existing recreational and interpretive offerings within the park. The proposed project is consistent with park management plan objectives as outlined in the park's 2005 Management Plan. Specifically, the reconstruction of the McCarty Cabin satisfies the plan's objective of proactively maintaining buildings, expanding opportunities for a diversity of park users and developing interpretive opportunities. The plan strengthens community relations through the plan's stated objective of recommended actions to establish overnight opportunities, maintain existing buildings and increase programs focused on local interests. Potential uses of the McCarty Cabin include overnight rental for the general public, volunteer housing and serve as an interpretive education center. The loop, parking and latrine will also provide trailhead opportunities with a direct tie in to the Ponderosa Trail.

The proposed project meets user preferences of Makoshika's visitor base, as evidenced by visitor input and participation in the park's most recent management plan update and input from numerous visitation assessments (see Appendix B: Visitor Preference Assessment Reference List).

Finally the proposed project provides developed recreational opportunities, increases the diversity of recreational use at a state park, and provides visitors with healthy outdoor participation options in safe and defined areas.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT

The public comment period for the draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed project began July 3, 2014 and ran through August 2, 2014. The Environmental Assessment was posted on the Montana State's website and distributed to individuals known to have an interest in the project in the Glendive area and statewide. No public comments were received during the public comment period.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

This alternative involves no action by FWP; that is, the State would not renovate the McCarty Cabin, reconstruct/re-purpose the McCarty Cabin road or add a vault latrine next to the parking area. FWP's Parks Division has made a commitment to eastern Montana and Makoshika State Park with respect to increased development and recreational opportunities. No development will leave this building in an unsafe condition. No development will leave Makoshika State Park with unmaintained buildings, less diverse opportunities for park users and underdeveloped interpretive opportunities.

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The Environmental Assessment becomes the final decision for FWP to proceed with the restoration of the McCarty Cabin. Please direct any further requests or questions to Doug Habermann, Region Five Park Manager, or Nathan Powell, Makoshika State Park Manager.

/S/ Douglas D Habermann

9/4/14

Signature: Douglas D Habermann Eastern Region Park Manager

Date